

approach from the approach that the administration had adopted at the beginning, which was a hands-off approach, the peace process.

The question is, how long would that commitment and involvement, personal involvement, last and how deep is it?

The President. Well, first of all, I think it's not a fair characterization to say we were hands-off—quite the contrary. I took an assessment of what was possible and realized that it was impossible to achieve peace with Chairman Arafat. He's failed the Palestinian people in the past. My predecessor tried hard, and I watched very carefully what was tried at Camp David.

Now, having said that, I also was working with the parties to try to set the conditions necessary for the emergence of a Palestinian government with whom we could work, so we wouldn't waste time, so that actually some progress could be made.

So the people have got to know when I say something, I mean it. Hopefully by now people have learned that, that when George W. commits America to a project, we mean that, we don't have idle chit-chat, that we're serious about our intentions.

Q. So the Arabs, or the people in the region shouldn't really be worrying about voices within your administration who are opposed to serious efforts by the United States—

The President. Yes, they don't have to worry about that, because I'm going to put the effort forward.

Q. So you don't listen to them?

The President. Well, it sounds like they don't listen to me, because when I say something, I mean it. And I think President Mubarak knows that. And I'm going to refresh their memories about the kind of administration I try to run. When I say something, we actually go do it. And when I say that I'm going to be involved in the peace process, I mean I'm going to be involved in the peace process.

Now, I understand it's going to be tough and difficult, but I believe it can happen. And I want to work toward achieving two states, so that the Palestinian suffering and humiliation ends.

Egypt-U.S. Relations

Q. And Mr. President, how do you see the future of the Egyptian-American relations, the strategical relations that binded those two countries over the past two decades?

The President. Strong I think, a good future. Listen, we have counted on Egypt, and Egypt counts on America. It's a mutually beneficial relationship. Throughout my Government, people deal with the Egyptian authorities, and I think it's in our interests, our national interest to keep a strong relationship with Egypt, and I intend to do so.

Q. Right. We are looking forward to seeing you, Mr. President, in Sharm el-Sheikh. Thank you very much for your time.

The President. It's going to be an exciting trip, and I look forward to the hospitality of the Egyptian people. And I want to assure the people of Egypt that the relationship is an important relationship between Egypt and the United States. And I want to assure your listeners that when I come to the region, I come with peace in mind and the possibilities of peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis is real in my mind, and I'm going to work toward that objective.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:48 p.m. in the Library at the White House for later broadcast and was embargoed for release by the Office of the Press Secretary until 5 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; and Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Al Arabiyya of the United Arab Emirates

May 29, 2003

Upcoming Meeting With Arab Leaders

Q. Thanks again. We really appreciate it, Mr. President. Sir, you will be discussing with the Arab leaders in Egypt their responsibilities toward the peace process. What are your expectations, practically speaking, from leaders such as President Mubarak and Crown Prince Abdullah?

The President. Well, first of all, one, the willingness to join with the United States and

other nations to cut off funding to terrorist organizations that can't stand the thought of peace. In other words, we all have got to work together to make security real, not only for Israel but for the Palestinian people. And that's my expectations from them.

What I hope to achieve is to be able to look at these leaders in the eye and say, "I believe peace is possible, and I'm going to work to peace." And this isn't just a visit in which you won't hear from me again. I believe peace is necessary and possible.

I told a lot of the leaders that after the Iraq situation, that I would work toward peace in the Middle East. I'm the kind of person who does what he says he's going to do, and now I'm working to achieve that. And I think it's possible.

Meeting With Israeli and Palestinian Authority Leaders

Q. Sir, you are known for your straight talk—some could even say, blunt talk. [Laughter] Are you going to use that approach in Aqaba with Prime Minister Abbas and Prime Minister Sharon? Are you going to hold them accountable for their commitments? And how far are you willing to go in this regard?

The President. I am going to hold people accountable for their commitments. And the good news is, is that Prime Minister Sharon knows that. I have had very straightforward conversations with him. I think it's in Israel's best interests that there be two states living side by side in peace. He too has embraced that idea. And I don't think there's going to be any need for me to hold him to account, but he's agreed to that vision.

I have not met Prime Minister Abbas yet. I look forward to it. And he will—I did meet his Finance Minister, a man who impressed me. And I will assure him that we will work together. But I'll also assure him that security is essential to achieve what we want, which is a viable Palestinian state.

Iraq

Q. Sir, you have held the removal of President Saddam Hussein's regime from power as a harbinger for a new dawn in the Middle East. Yet, the day after in Iraq has been marred, unfortunately, by chaos, some blood-

shed, uncertainty. What is that going to do to your vision of a broader, different, more liberal political landscape in the Middle East? You've talked about it several times.

The President. Absolutely. Well, first of all, we're just starting in Iraq. And a lot of Iraq is stable, and the life of the Iraqi people are better now than it was prior to the war. I readily concede Baghdad is still a relatively dangerous place. And therefore, first things first, which is to bring security to Baghdad. But along with security, we're bringing better electricity, more food, more medicine. And it's not just America, by the way; the world is now involved with the reconstruction of Iraq.

I remind people that, for example, in the United States it took 13 years for us to finally settle on a Constitution. And I guess some expect us to do it in 13 days in Iraq, and it's going—it's just going to take longer. And I talked to Jerry Bremer, and again, will see him when I go to the region and will remind him that we're patient here in America, that we—you know, it wasn't until March 19th that we actually began operations. So there hasn't been much time yet.

I'm not surprised that there's still some pessimism and people are unsettled. After all, they have lived under a brutal regime for a long time. But I'm confident we'll achieve our objective, and I'm confident the Iraqi people will be better off.

Iran and Syria

Q. Sir, you've used tough language vis-à-vis Iran and Syria in the last few weeks. Is the United States on a collision course with Tehran? And what is the state of play with Syria, following Secretary Powell's visit to Damascus?

The President. Well, first, Secretary Powell had a good visit to Damascus. And yes, we used some tough rhetoric, because it looked like Ba'athists were trying to escape into Syria, and obviously, we didn't want that to happen. And the Syrian Government pledged that that wouldn't be the case. We take people for their word until proven otherwise.

In Iran, obviously, we're nervous about the reporting now out that there's some Al Qaida inside of Iran. We just want the Iranians to

understand that if there are Al Qaida loose in Iran, we expect them to be detained. If there are Al Qaida in Iran and they plot against the United States, that obviously we're going to be displeased with that.

My hope, of course, is that the Iranians respond. And they've heard our message loud and clear, and I suspect they will.

Q. I have one more question, sir.

The President. Sure.

Arab Allies in the War on Terrorism

Q. Who are your Arab allies in the war on terrorism? Sometimes we hear conflicting reports, for instance, on Saudi Arabia—

The President. Yes.

Q. —sometimes they cooperate, we are told; sometimes they don't cooperate. What is the state of play?

The President. That's a good question. Crown Prince Abdullah is a strong ally in the war on terror. There's no doubt in my mind that he is moving within the Kingdom to bring the killers to justice and to prevent other killing. King Abdullah is a strong ally in the war on terror. President Mubarak is a strong ally in the war on terror. I know this not only from my conversations with these men, but also because of the cooperation between our intelligence services.

The Gulf Coast countries have been strong supporters in the war on terror, and I'm grateful for that support.

Q. Mr. President, we really appreciate it. Thanks again. There are so many questions, so little time. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, I'm sorry.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:54 p.m. in the Library at the White House for later broadcast and was embargoed for release by the Office of the Press Secretary until 4 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia; Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Finance Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority; L. Paul Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq; and King Abdullah II of Jordan. A reporter referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Statement on Signing Legislation Concerning Participation of Taiwan in the World Health Organization

May 29, 2003

Today I have signed into law S. 243, an Act concerning participation of Taiwan in the World Health Organization. The United States fully supports the overall goal of Taiwan's participation in the work of the World Health Organization, including observership. The United States has expressed publicly its firm support for Taiwan's observer status and will continue to do so. The executive branch shall, as is consistent with the President's constitutional authority to conduct the Nation's foreign affairs, construe the Act to be consistent with the "one China" policy of the United States, which remains unchanged. The executive branch also shall construe the reporting requirement in section 1(c) of the Act in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair foreign relations, the national security, the deliberative processes of the Executive, or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties. The Secretary of State will continue, of course, as a matter of comity to keep the Congress appropriately informed of the matters addressed by the reporting requirement.

George W. Bush

The White House,
May 29, 2003.

NOTE: S. 243, approved May 29, was assigned Public Law No. 108-28.

Executive Order 13307—European Central Bank

May 29, 2003

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including sections 1 and 15 of the International Organizations Immunities Act (22 U.S.C. 288 and 288f-5), I hereby extend to the European Central Bank the privileges, exemptions, and immunities provided to public international organizations designated by the President under